

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 8, 2022

The Honorable Marcia L. Fudge  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
451 7<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20410

The Honorable Deanne Criswell  
Administrator  
FEMA  
500 C Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Secretary Fudge and Administrator Criswell:

We write to you today in strong support of the Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP) to supplement the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program to address the urgent housing needs of displaced survivors following major disasters. With longer-term direct rental assistance and wraparound case management services provided by local housing officials, DHAP has a proven track record of helping disaster survivors get back on their feet, find permanent housing solutions, and secure employment.

Created in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, DHAP services are targeted to meet the needs of the most vulnerable individuals and families following major disasters. Indeed, both Republican and Democratic administrations have identified the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as the best-positioned agency to address the medium and long-term needs of families with children, veterans, individuals with disabilities, and others who face barriers to other shelter assistance programs.

In Florida, there have been nearly 50 Major Disaster Declarations since Hurricane Andrew in 1992, including Hurricane Irma in 2017 and Hurricane Michael in 2018, which devastated many Florida communities and thousands of low-income and vulnerable families at risk of homelessness. Florida also served as a place of refuge for as many as 50,000 Puerto Ricans following Hurricane Maria in 2017.

Despite the severity of damage, significant delays in recovery, and repeated requests from Members of Congress and Governor of Puerto Rico, Trump administration leadership at HUD and FEMA refused to enter into an agreement under Section 102(b)(2) of the Homeland Security Act and Sections 408(b)(1), 426, and 305(a) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.

As one of his first acts in office, President Biden signed Executive Order 13985, directing all federal agencies to evaluate programs and policies to promote equitable treatment of minority and marginalized populations and investments in traditionally underserved communities. We commend you for your thoughtful and immediate action to determine gaps in programs including disaster response and recovery. Similarly, we strongly welcome reports that FEMA and HUD plan to significantly revise their medium- and long-term housing assistance programs for disaster survivors through the newly titled Disaster Assistance Supportive Housing program.

As representatives of a state particularly vulnerable to major disasters and increasingly scarce affordable housing, we respectfully request a briefing on the following topics:

1. Progress made towards fully implementing Executive Order 13985 and recommendations provided in the Government Accountability Office's 2021 report on barriers to receiving federal recovery assistance;
2. Implementation of the Disaster Assistance Supportive Housing program;
3. Engagement with state and local emergency personnel; and
4. Resources needed to strengthen these programs.

As Floridians, we have all weathered disasters of varying severity, but are unified in our commitment to helping our neighbors and communities prepare for and recover when the worst should happen. We appreciate the work you have already done to ensure no community or family is left behind and stand ready assist in this endeavor.

Sincerely,



Val B. Demings  
Member of Congress



Al Lawson  
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress



Darren Soto  
Member of Congress



Stephanie Murphy  
Member of Congress



Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress



Charlie Crist  
Member of Congress